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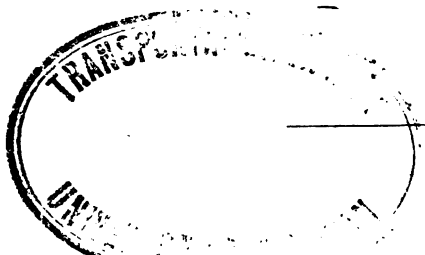
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On some Roman Pavements and  
some Intrecci of this Country, chiefly  
with respect to their Meaning.

BY

HY. COLLEY MARCH, M.D., F.S.A.



[From "Proceedings" Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian  
Field Club, Vol. XXI., p.p. 162, 205, 1900.]



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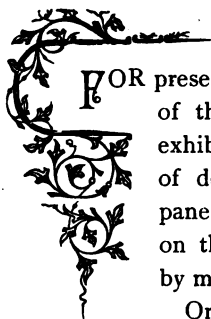
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By HY. COLLEY MARCH, M.D., F.S.A.

(*Read Dec. 19th, 1899.*)

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I.—ROMAN PAVEMENTS.



FOR present purposes, the tessellated Roman pavements of this country may be divided into those that exhibit nothing more than a general scheme of decoration, and those that are set out into panels or ornamental fields, which are occupied on the one hand by symbols, and on the other by mythological or allegorical subjects.

Orpheus charming wild animals, the various divinities of a comprehensive pantheon, the presentment of a popular fable, emblems of the Seasons, Nereids, Dolphins, and Hippocamps: all these tell their own tale.

But symbols have an esoteric meaning. To discover and demonstrate this, let the tessellation recently exposed near Dorchester serve for a text, while as illustration we possess upwards of 50 others, of which the most important are at Frampton, Silchester, Caerwent (*Venta Silurum*), London, Brading, Lincoln, Leicester, Bath, Corinium or Cirencester, Uriconium or Wroxeter, Great Whitcombe and Stockwood in



**ROMAN PAVEMENT FOUND IN OLGA ROAD, DORCHESTER, IN 1899, AND NOW LAID ON THE FLOOR OF THE DORSET COUNTY MUSEUM.**

Extreme length of portion shewn above, 40ft. ; breadth, 18ft.

This central portion was surrounded by a broad border of plain red tesserae.





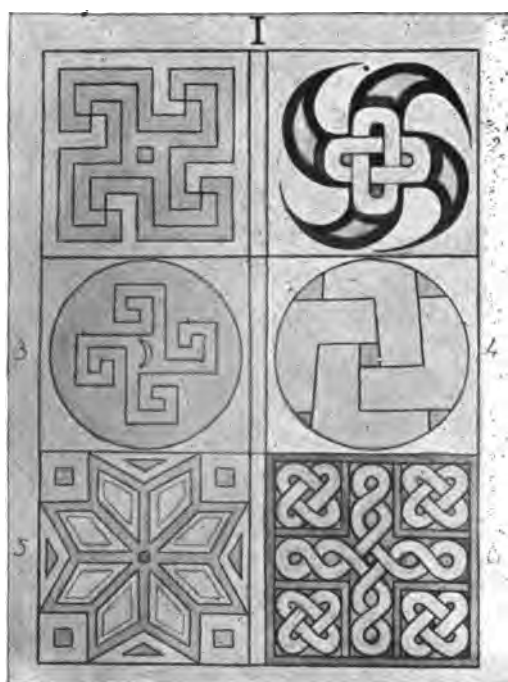
## AN ACCOUNT OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

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- I.—1. A fretted fylfot, with square sun in the centre. Mosaic, Newton St. Loe, near Bath.
2. Normal curvilinear fylfot, with solar duplex in the centre. Mosaic, Newton St. Loe.
3. Fretted fylfot, with lunar crescent in the centre. Pre-Christian coin from Crete.
4. Shell gorget, solar duplex. Found with other solar symbols in pre-historic grave mounds, Fain's Island, Tennessee. *Bureau of Ethnology*, 1880-81, p. 270.
5. Eight-rayed solar glory, fretted, with square central sun. Mosaic, Newton St. Loe.
6. Solar cross, of equal limbs, with a solar duplex in each angle. Mosaic, Lincoln.
- II.—A. Roman Altar with normal rectilinear fylfot in apposition with lunar crescent. Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland. *Art Journal*, 1875, p. 369.
- B. Roman Altar with normal rectilinear fylfot in apposition with solar disc. Ditto.
- III.—1. Detail from Egyptian Tomb Ceiling. Prisse. Flinders Petrie, *Art in Egypt*, p. 37.
2. Detail from pre-Christian Greek Vase. Goodyear.
3. Detail from mosaic, Dorchester.
- IV.—1. Fylfot isolated from a fret. Mosaic, Brading.
2. Empanelled fylfot. Mosaic, Silchester.
3. Ditto. Mosaic, London. A similar one occurs in a Pompeian mosaic.
- V.—1. Fylfot with disc in centre. Detail from a mosaic, Caerwent.
2. Solar cross, eight-rayed solar disc, solar path, and fylfot constructed of avian heads. Shell gorget, from stone grave, Tennessee. *Bureau of Eth.*, 1880-81, p. 284.
- VI.—1. Irradiant solar disc, with solar duplex in the centre. Mosaic, Dorchester.
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- VII.—Solar duplex, triquetra, and bind-knot, on a Christian cross. Disley, Cheshire. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Monuments*, plate vi.
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- IX.—1. Solar disc with lotus glory, Temple of Isis, Pompeii. Goodyear.  
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 A.D. 737. Cattaneo, p. 109.
- X.—1. Conventional vase. Mosaic, London.  
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 1882, p. 21. Dennis, *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* II., 437.
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- XXIII.— The "Forum Cross." Cattaneo, p. 190.











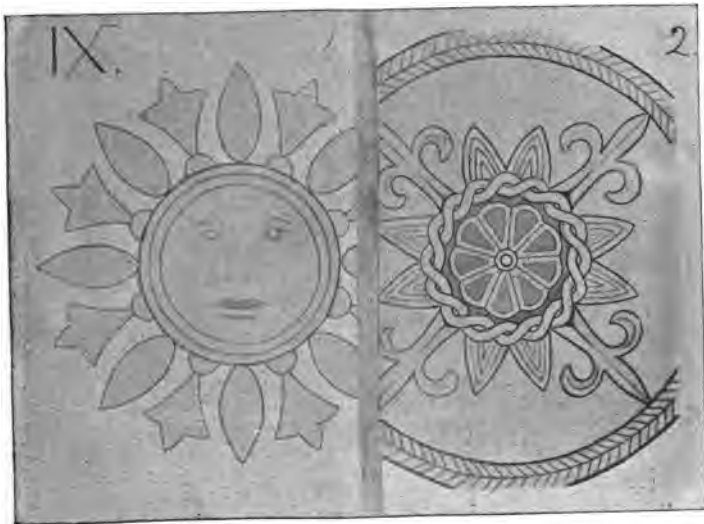




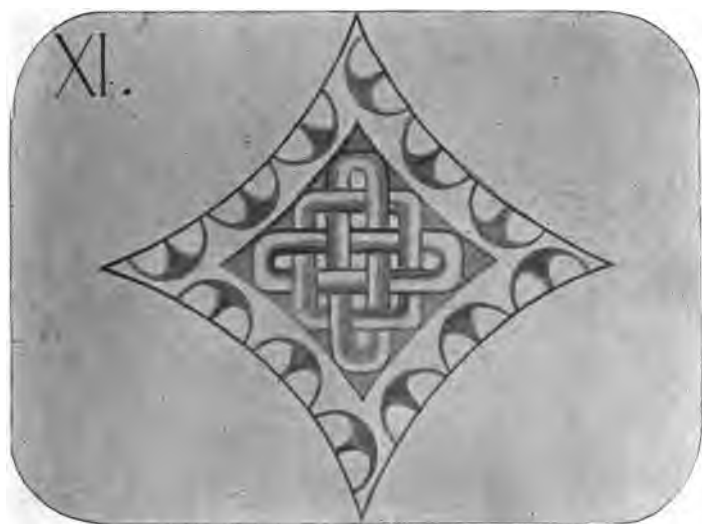




VIII.



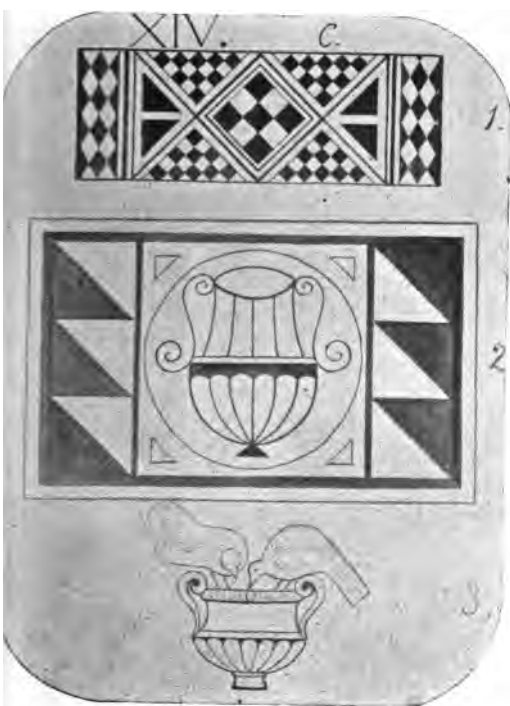






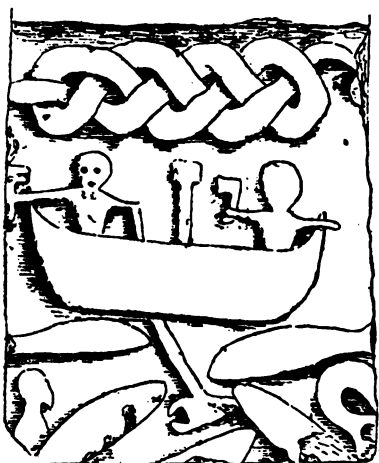




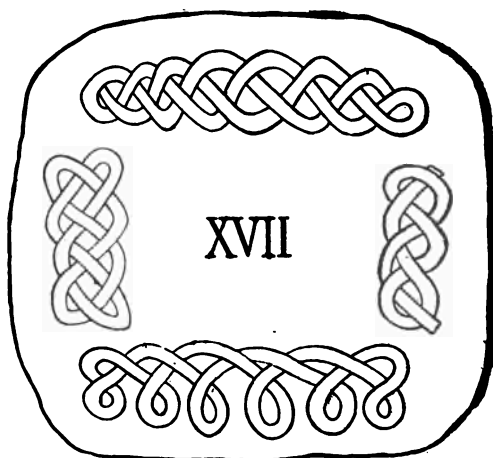




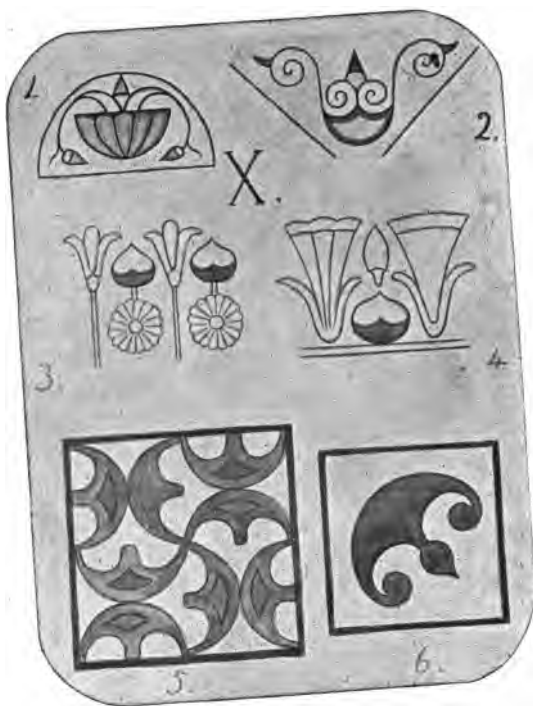




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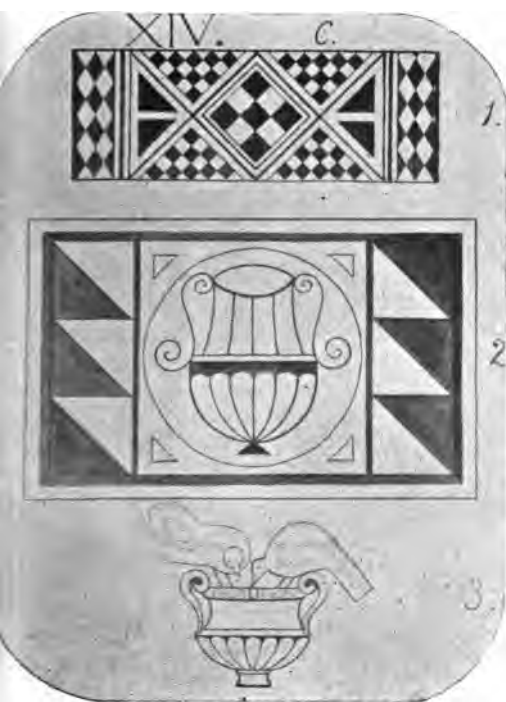






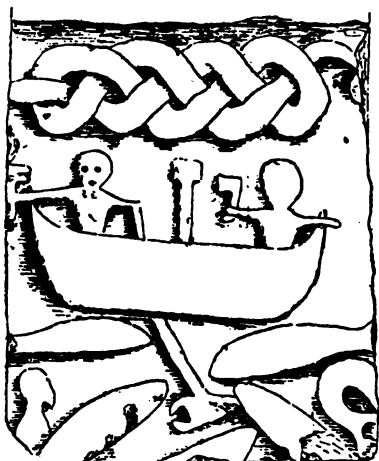
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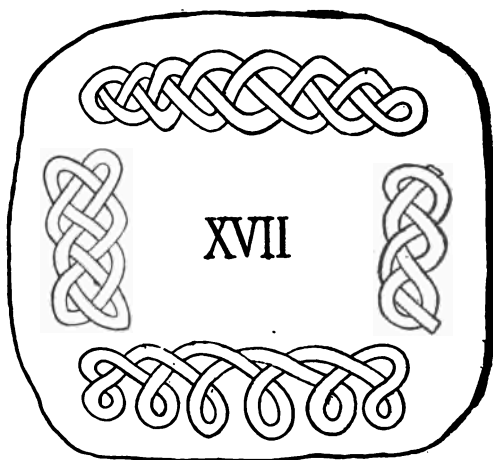




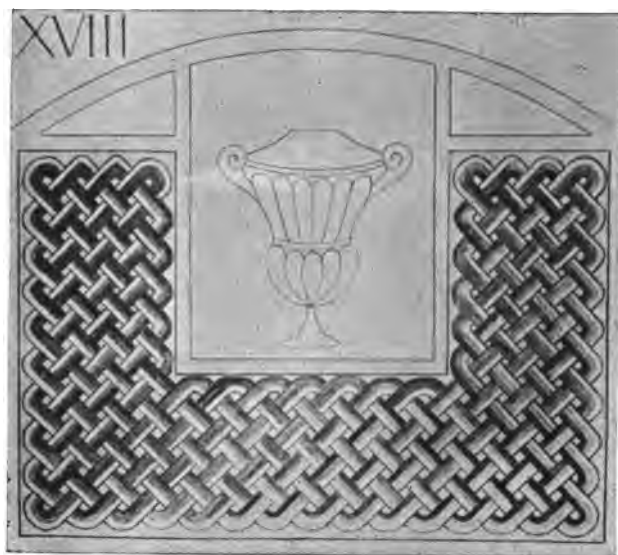




XVI.





















1875

1875

Gloucester, Basildon in Berks, Bignor in Sussex, Worplesden in Surrey, Mansfield Woodhouse in Nottingham, and Aldborough in Yorkshire. And these British examples should be compared, in the mind's eye, with the graceful mosaics of pre-Christian Greece and Italy.

Turning now to the Dorchester pavement, let us ask ourselves, Is it Roman at all, in the sense that it was wrought by Latin artists from designs current in the Eternal City? Is it Italian at all? Or does it not show, at any rate, a barbaric influence, an attempt to satisfy exotic tastes?

If such questions cannot be answered, at least they can be asked, and they should be borne in mind as we proceed to show that this mosaic has a solar significance and was addressed to men who were attracted by a solar cult.

For who were the peoples brought hither by the Romans to conquer and garrison this country? From the north of Europe were Batavi, Menapii, Frisii, Tungri, Morini, the Brittones who were natives of Gaul, Nervii, Galli, Lingones, and Vangiones. From the south came Daci and Rhæti, Thraces, Dalmatæ, Astures, Varduli, and Hispani, together with Hamii, who furnished a company of Syrian archers. No doubt these troops were, for the most part, officered by Italians, but we know of some that "they passed into Britain under the command of their own chiefs and added new laurels to their former fame."\*

The Gaulish Atrebates had been sent into this country by Cæsar, under Commius the Prince of Arras, and had built a great city at Silchester; and the early towns of Ilchester and Bath were the work of the Belgæ.† And it is well to remember that Carausius, an obscure Batavian pilot, was able, in the year 288, to make himself Emperor of Britain, where he ruled for six years.

The favourite solar divinities in this country during the Roman occupation were Apollo, Serapis, and Mithras. Of the Mithraic cult little is known. It was introduced into Rome 70 years before Christ, was established there under Trajan A.D. 98, and

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\* Tacitus, *Hist.* iv., 2.

† Elton's *Origins*, pp. 304, 343.

was continued till the time of Julian, A.D. 360. It competed with Christianity by using similar symbols, rites and festivals. In the reign of Septimius Severus this worship was widely diffused and highly popular in the western part of the Empire. Elagabalus, who became ruler of Rome A.D. 218, and his first cousin Alexander Severus, by whom he was succeeded in 222, were both, while almost children, made priests of the Syro-Phœnician sun-god. The cremated remains of Severus were preserved in the "Portland Vase," upon the base of which Mithras is represented adorned with a Phrygian cap. Coins of Elagabalus in apposition with the sun-god have been found at Uriconium or Wroxeter.

A bas-relief in the Court of the Belvedere at the Vatican, represents Mithras slaying the bull, with the legend SOLI INVICTO DEO.\* In the year of Grace 321, Constantine issued an edict by which he enjoined the solemn observance of the Dies Solis or Sunday, whereby he pleased both Christians and Pagans. Before his formal conversion in 337, his favourite divinity had been the sun-god Apollo; but his coins of copper were stamped on the reverse with the words SOLI INVICTO COMITI, a phrase usually applied to Mithras, and money with a like legend was struck in London.†

At Bath was a temple to the Sun, whose head is carved on the pediment; and if Aquæ Solis, be indeed Aquæ Sulis, Sul is a Belgic name.‡

At Vindobala or Rutchester, was an altar inscribed SOLI APOLLINI; and at Magnæ or Carvoran, were two addressed to Jupiter Heliopolitanus. At other stations on or near Hadrian's Wall, have been found many altars to Mithras. Hübner records twelve.§ Indeed more altars were dedicated in Britain to the Invincible Mithras than to any other single god. There was one at Vindobala or Rutchester, where the Frisians were quartered; at Corstopitum or Corbridge with the Nervii; at

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\* Lundy, p. 163. † Wright's Uriconium, p. 443. ‡ Gaulish, *Littre*.

§ Nos. 99, 349, 434, 481, 541, 579, 645, 646, 650, 833, 890, 1,039.

Bremenium or High Rochester with the Varduli ; at Borcovicus or Housesteads, with the Tungri, where the inscriptions are INVICTO MITRAE, and DEO SOLI INVICTO MITRAE, and where there was a Mithraic cave. At Riechester in Northumberland, was an altar SOLI / HIERON / V.L.M., Hieronymus to the Sun ; and Mithraic monuments have been discovered at Cambeck Fort, in Cumberland.

Altars to Mithras have been found at Longovicus or Lanchester,\* with the first cohort of the Lingones, and at Segedunum or Wallsend, with the fourth cohort of the same troop. The Lingones were a portion of the Legio Secunda Augusta, which also furnished garrisons at York, and, what is more to our purpose, at Caerwent and the stations † between Exeter and Richborough, doubtless including Dorchester. Small sacrificial bulls of bronze have been found in Dorset, and are, probably, of Mithraic import.

Hadrian devoted himself to Serapis, the divine equivalent of Osiris, who was associated with the nocturnal sun-god of Egypt; ‡ and Isis and Serapis were usually worshipped in the same temple.§

A college of priests of Isis was founded at Rome, B.C., 80 ; a temple was built there in honour of Osiris and Isis, B.C., 44 ; and soon afterwards their festival was recognised by the official calendar. A portrait exists of Prescennius Niger, who is represented amid the friends of Commodus, as celebrating the mysteries of Isis. ¶

The bust of Serapis appears on a gem with the legend ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΣΑΡΑΠΙΣ. On another, Serapis is seated, whilst before him stands Isis, with the legend Η ΚΥΡΙΑ ΙΣΙΣ ΑΡΝΗ, "the Virgin-lady Isis." Her priests practised celibacy, the tonsure, and the surplice ; and the flower she wore was the lotus.

\* On Watling Street.

† Tamara, Isaca, Voliba, Uxella, Ischalis, Venta Belgarum, &c., Ptolemy.

‡ Vide "Hymn to Isis," Elton's *Origins* p. 340, and "Hymn to the sun-god Aten," Petrie's *Hist. of Egypt* II., 215.

§ Tacitus, *Hist.* IV., 84.

¶ Spartien.

There was a Serapeum at York, as disclosed by an inscription  
DEO SANCTO / SERAPI / TEMPLVM A SO / LO FECIT CL HIERONY /  
MIANVS LEG / LEG VI. VIC.\*

Tacitus observes that the worship of Isis was established among the Alamanni, † and coins stamped with the effigies of Isis, Horus, Osiris and Anubis have been found in Britain, and some of them were struck in London.

It is clear that there was a wide stream of religious influence flowing from Egypt to this country. Thanks to papyrus rolls, we are acquainted with the beliefs that attached to the solar cult on the Nile, and with the doctrines that concerned the passage of the soul through the horrors and dangers of the underworld, protected by Ra and guided by him through the Gates of the Hours. To these religious conceptions, that filled the minds of devout men in the centre and source of civilization for thousands of years before the Christian Era, we must frequently refer.

Rightly to consider mosaics like this of Dorchester, it is necessary to proceed from the well-known to the less known, and so to the unknown. Perhaps the most easily recognised symbol in the world is the fylfot, otherwise termed swastika, gammadion, and tetraskelē. Opinions have differed as to its realistic significance. It has been called a fire-drill, lightning, a pledge of blessedness or good fortune, the spiral sweep of the stars, the axial rotation of sun or moon, the four winds of heaven. But all these ideas are included in one sufficient expression : the fylfot is a symbol of divine energy.

Its normal curvilinear form is shown in Illustration I., fig. 2, taken from the pavement of Newton St. Loe, near Bath. Precisely similar swastikas are found on mosaics at Caerwent, Silchester, Wroxeter, and Lincoln.


Its normal rectilinear form is shown in Illustration II., figs. 1 and 2, taken from Roman Altars on Hadrian's Wall, where it is carved in apposition with the lunar crescent and the solar disc.

\* Wright, *Celt, Roman, and Saxon*, p. 329.

† *Germania*, ix.

One of these altars, at Amboglana or Birdoswald, was dedicated to Jupiter by the Dacians; another was raised at Bremenium, at High Rochester, in the time of Elagabalus, by Lucius Cœcilius to Minerva, and the Genius of the College; and a third was erected at the same place by the 1st Cohort of the Varduli, whose cavalry was 1,000 strong, to their Genius and standards.

The fylfot, the "fully footed" symbol, had a great vogue in Europe throughout an area co-extensive with that of the use of bronze. It first appeared, according to present knowledge, at Hissarlik, many centuries before the time of Christ. It is so often presented in apposition or in conjunction with more especial solar symbols, that D'Alviella regards it as a counterpart sign of the sun.

The Egyptians, in the ceiling decorations of their tombs, had evolved a beautiful wandering rectilinear design, Illustration III., fig. 1, with no intention whatever of producing a swastika, for this was a device of which they seem to have been wholly ignorant. But the quick-witted Greeks, well accustomed to it, recognised its familiar lines even in the implication of a foreign fret, and, as Mr. Goodyear points out, on a geometrical vase assigned to the vi. cent. before our era, this detail was separately treated. It is shown in Illustration III., fig. 2, and for my own part I have sometimes fancied I could read in it the archaic Greek letters  $\chi\rho\eta$  traction of  $\chi\rho\alpha\delta\upsilon$  present of  $\chi\rho\acute{o}\mu\alpha\iota$  times placed on  or  $\chi\rho\acute{o}$  a con-  
impertive  
a word some-  
a gift, with the  
meaning "make use of me."

However that may be, we find on the Brading tessellation, that the designer has detached this portion of an ordinary braid, has placed it at the head of a beautiful mosaic pavement, and has thrown an arch round it, to isolate it, and to prove to all beholders that he, at any rate, could see a swastika even when hidden in a fret, Illustration IV., fig. 1. It was only another step to empanel it, and to make it contribute, like an avowed fylfot, to a general scheme of solar symbolism, as may be seen



in examples from London and Pompeii,\* and in all these cases, the feet of the symbol rest on the empanelling, Illustration IV., figs. 2, 3.

It is not going too far, then, to say that the fylfot exists in a cryptic form on the Dorchester pavement, Illustration III., fig. 3.

In what parts of Europe was the fylfot in favour at the time of Hadrian? In Greece and Spain, in the north of Italy, among the Celts and Gauls and Germans; with all the peoples, in fact, who were brought hither to garrison Britain. In the Belgio-Roman cemetery of Juslenville, it is carved on memorial stones, in association with the lotus. But though it occurs on a medal of Alexander Severus, it is remarkable that in Rome itself it is not to be seen on any monument prior to the fourth century of this era; and the only tombstone outside the catacombs on which a fylfot appears is that of a Syrian. Was it then a cisalpine, or was it rather an alien taste that was considered by the makers of these Britanno-Roman mosaics?

Let us take another point in the argument. Fretted fylfots occur on pre-Christian Cretan coins, and *in their centre* is placed sometimes a lunar crescent, and sometimes that rosette which represents the solar disc.† Illustration I., fig. 3.

We have already noticed a normal curvilinear fylfot in the mosaic at Newton St. Loe. In a neighbouring panel of the same pavement, Illustration I., fig. 1, is a fylfot of the fretted but free type: its feet are not in contact with the panelling: and its centre is occupied by what we must take to be the sun, although it is quadrangular as befits a fret; whilst a tetraskelē at Caerwent, Illustration V., fig. 1, has a solar disc for its centre and a solar glory for its circumference.

But now another symbol must be noticed as occupying the centre of a fylfot.

The axis of the normal curvilinear swastika at Newton St. Loe, Illustration I., fig. 2, where Apollo adorns the mosaic, and at

\* Bolton's *Mosaic Pavings*, Pl. v., viii.

† D'Alviella, *Migration of Symbols*, pp. 57, 150.

Lincoln, at Silchester, and even in Algeria, presents the twin interlaced ovals that we see on the Dorchester pavement, Illustration VI., fig. 1.

It is obvious that these two ovals are intertwined so as to form a cross of equal limbs, which is a sign of the sun. A convenient name for it will be the solar duplex. Its precise significance belongs to those arcana of a solar cult that have yet to be discovered. But we get light from Egypt, from the orientation of the chief temples of Karnak to the solstices or the equinoxes, and from the adoration of Ra. "O Prince," was the invocation, "O Ra, with thy two eyes, lord of the two horizons, may we see thy face again, for we love the circuits of the two Regions.\*

The solar-duplex, then, which occurs on a mosaic at Pompeii, † which is found in Africa and the north of Europe, and which abounds on Britanno-Roman pavements, represents the sun's path across the heavens and through the underworld at the winter and summer solstices. And strange to say it has been met with on a shell gorget, in the prehistoric grave-mounds of Tennessee, together with a multitude of other forms of the solar cross, ‡ Illustration I., fig. 4.

The four protuberances of the symbol gave it a cruciform character that was recognised by the early Christians of Europe, and they sculptured it on their crosses and in their churches. For that which was the sign of a solar god could be used quite as well to designate the Sun of Righteousness. And, in addition, the double interlacement could signify Christ's two inseparable natures, the human and the divine. In like manner the three protuberances in the knot of a single unbroken strand, the triquetra, the symbol of a pagan triad, stood also for triunion in the Christian Trinity. Examples may be seen on a cross at Disley, Cheshire, Illustration VII., and on a stone from the old church at Dover of the IV. or V. century.

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\* Arch. lii. 408 (viii. 9).

† Bolton's *Mosaic Pavings*, Pl. i.

‡ Holmes, Bureau of Eth., 1880—1881, Pl. lii., p. 270.

Another of the shell gorgets of Tennessee demands consideration.\* It represents a solar cross upon a solar disc within an eight-rayed solar glory and surrounded by the solar path which indicates the four points of the sun's rising and setting at the summer and winter solstices, Illustration V., fig. 2. And outside all, arranged so as to form a fylfot, but a sign according to some writers† of the Four Winds of Heaven, are four heads of a bird that in Mr. Holmes' opinion resembles the ivory-billed woodpecker. In other lands, other birds were sacred to the Sun. The hawk, for example, and the goose. In Asia Minor the cock, as herald of the dawn, is often placed beside the triskele, and was made sacred to Helios, by the Greeks.‡ On the Brading pavement is represented a man with a cock's head and feet.

The solar simplex formed of a single oval, turned upon itself so as to resemble the figure 8, occurs at Pompeii, and on many European mosaics, as well as on early Christian crosses in this country. It is the simplest indication of the sun's diurno-nocturnal path.

A solar cross, constructed of an ordinary cable pattern, is a common device. There is one on the Lincoln mosaic, Illustration I., fig. 6, and in each of the angles formed by its limbs, is placed a solar duplex. Even this conjunction passed into Christian art. In the church of San Pietro, at Villanova, of the VIII. cent. is a precisely similar Latin cross, and at either end of its lateral limbs is a double interlacement, Illustration VIII.

The solar duplex fills, as we have seen, an important panel of the Dorchester pavement, Illustration VI., fig. 1; and it may be noticed now, that it is surrounded by a solar glory of lotus elements that are a little conventionalised. The Egyptian hieroglyph for this "glory" is a semi-circular figure formed of

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\* Holmes, *op. cit.*, Pl. lix., p. 248.

† Pictographs of Algonquins, cited by Stolpe, *Amerikansk ornamentik*, p. 28.

‡ D'Alviella, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

half a disc, and four concentric bands of blue, green, and red, and a fifth band marked with radiating lines.\* In art these rays are sometimes floral. In a mural decoration of the Temple of Isis at Pompeii, the sun's face is encircled by an alternation of lotus bud and blossom. This flower was an attribute of Isis; it was, too, a sign of life and fecundity; and above all it was a symbol of the sun, Illustration IX., fig. 1.

With this may be compared a Christian sculpture, of the year 737, from the famous Baptistry at Cividale† which exhibits the solar rosette, Illustration IX., fig. 2, encircled by the solar path and adorned with a glory of lotus rays. This path is composed of two separate meanders twisted together, and resembles that which surrounds a cross on the Lincoln pavement. It ought, however, to be made of a single meander that goes twice round the circle, giving the appearance of two. Such a true *intreccio* encloses the solar duplex on the Caerwent pavement, encircles the solar disc on a spindle-whorl of Troy, and borders a scarab of the XVIth dynasty.‡

A square sun with a fretted solar glory is common in mosaic panels, as at Newton St. Loe. Illustration I., fig. 5. In art the rays of a star are usually five. An eight-rayed star was employed by the Assyrians, B.C. 840, to denote the sun. Similar devices were cut, as Mithraic signs, on Gnostic gems, and they entered, at last, into Christian symbolism. The eight solar rays having betokened a restoration of life, the octagon acquired a like significance, and the number eight became a sign of Regeneration.

The badges of the Roman legions are given in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. They consist, in almost every instance, of a solar cognisance, of a disc sometimes plain, sometimes rotate, sometimes eight-rayed, and often in conjunction with the lunar crescent. There is hardly a solar rosette on mosaic pavements

\* Sixth Mem., Arch. Survey of Egypt, p. 30.

† Cattaneo, *Arch. in Italy*, Engl. Trans., p. 106.

‡ Schliemann's *Ilios*, fig. 1847. † Flinders Petrie's *Scarabs*, Pl. 26, fig. 716.

that cannot be matched in these ensigns. Illustration XII. shows only a dozen out of many scores. The eight streamers that issue from the limb of a circle two feet in diameter on the Isurium pavement indicate, not a star, but the solar disc, with a radial glory closely resembling that on the Tennessee gorget.

The Lotus, ultimately transformed by Christians into a lily and made an attribute of the Blessed Virgin, was a sacred symbol that had pervaded the whole of Egyptian art for 6,000 years. It had spread with a religious impulsion into many lands, where it was adopted with lessening sanctity as an ornamental motif, and where it underwent by degrees a number of metamorphoses. Some of these, it is necessary to examine.

At the outset we may glance at those ordinary presentments of the lotus that adorn the walls of Egyptian tombs. We can distinguish bud, blossom, disc, and leaves, Illustration X., figs. 3, 4. Subsequent changes have not greatly obscured the bud. The disc, which Mr. Goodyear regards as the upper surface of the seed-vessel, grew increasingly like a rosette, and in an especial manner came to stand for the sun. The curled tip of the leaf originated a striking motif, common enough on mosaic pavements, and often seen on legionary stones to which it was transferred from legionary ensigns. In those of the Batavi, of the Marcomanni, and others, we find a curious zoomorphic development; but they are lotus derivatives, nevertheless, and had a solar association. In its simpler form the curled leaf appears at Pompeii,\* at Corinium, at Lincoln, Illustration X., fig. 5, and, somewhat disguised, at Silchester, fig. 6.

We have already seen that the flower in profile is used to construct a solar glory, Illustration IX., but its petals, in full face, may be employed for the same purpose, as in the Dorchester pavement, where the solar duplex is irradient, Illustration VI., fig. 1.

A careful study of Cyprian vases is needful in order to understand the metamorphoses of the blossom into squares and

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\* Bolton, *Op. Cit.*, Pl. ix.

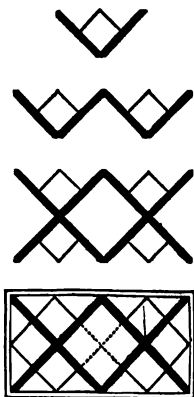
triangles. Its first stage is shown in\* Illustration XIII. A. The flower is easily recognised, but the outlines of its parts are becoming rectilinear. At the same time the calyx is curling over, on its way to the formation of a curious motif that does not now concern us. An intermediate stage is seen on the neck of an amphora,† Illustration XIII. B. A designer has come in, and has constructed a pattern for textiles. He makes the lines of the flower simple, straight, and symmetrical.

Next, he repeats this element. Then, he adds an inversion so that a central square is produced, as well as two lateral half squares which are all dealt with, and filled in like so many calyces. Lastly, he empanels the whole, and his pattern is complete. But the lotus has now become cryptic in a multitude of squares and triangles.

A still further stage of metamorphosis is witnessed in ‡ Illustration XIV., fig. 1., which represents a detail on the neck of another Ormidian vase. But below the cryptic flower, on the vessel's body, is a band of buds and blossoms realistically treated, as if to show that the tradition of the lotus is continued through all changes.

It is continued also, though perhaps sub-consciously, on the Dorchester pavement, where an amphora has on its neck a decoration of squares, and is supported on either side by a row of large triangles, Illustration XIV., fig. 2. The amphoræ of Silchester and of Frampton have similar supports.

The vase as a sign of fecundity is also, by the fact itself, a solar symbol. If Earth is the teeming Mother, the Sun is the divine Father. The beneficence of nature was acknowledged at curative springs by placing there a sculptured goddess who held



\* Perrot and Chipiez, *Art in Phœnicia and Cyprus* ii., 306.

† Ibid. ii., 308.

‡ Perrot et Chipiez, *Op. Cit.* ii., 297.

an urn from which the healing water flowed. From an elegant fluted vase, on a London pavement,\* Illustration X., fig. 1., flowers are issuing, and we should not doubt that a detail of the Dorchester pavement, fig. 2, is a highly conventionalised treatment of the same motif. From an æsthetic standpoint, the large amphora would have been spoilt by any floral contact. But the flowers that would otherwise have issued from its mouth have been transferred, with an artist's licence, to a neighbouring field.

This vessel is shown, Illustration XIV., fig. 2, together with an amphora from a sculptured marble sepulchre that was found in the Etruscan cemetery of Perugia, fig. 3. It belonged to the Volumnias family who had Romanised their name into Volumnius. The inurnments ranged from B.C. 200 to B.C. 48, and this was the latest.† It has a gadrooned body and scrolled handles. But be it noted that birds are feeding from its interior. A closely similar amphora, known as the "Vase of the Doves," appears in the mosaic at the Capitoline Museum, Rome.

There is an amphora, too, at the base of the cross of the VIII. century already noticed, Illustration VIII., but the birds that find food in it are peacocks. In Christian art the peacock denotes a glorified human being; whilst the vase on the one hand, and the decussated disc on the other, represent the Eucharistic Species. A peacock feeding from an urn may be seen on the Brading mosaic; and in the cathedral at Pola, of the VI. century, vine branches issue from a vase, and Christ's monogram is placed between two of these birds.

Another sign must be dealt with. It is the last, and the least understood. By those who have followed and who have yielded any assent to previous arguments, it will be looked upon, in advance, as a solar symbol. It is an intreccio, but a false one, for it is composed of more than one strand. It is, in fact, an interlacement of four ovals, Illustration VI., fig. 2. A similar

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\* Arch. xxxvi., 204.

† *Art Journal*, 1882, p. 21. Dennis' *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* ii., 437.

design occurs on the pavement at Caerwent. It will be convenient to call it the solar quadruplex. But what evidence is there that it represented the four-fold path, the solstitial and equinoxial courses of the sun both across the heavens and through the underworld? The subterranean passage of Ra was to the Egyptians a matter of supreme importance. The soul of Osiris, the soul, that is, of every man who was beloved as Osiris was adored by Isis and Nephthys, had to undertake this perilous journey, safely perhaps if only he could sail in Ra's barge, aid Ra in his dark struggle with fiends and serpents all through the twelve dreadful caverns, and emerge with him at last into the gladness of another life. Would any scheme of a solar cult be complete without a symbol of this? "O beautiful youth," said the widowed ones, "come back to thy temple, for we see thee not. The cycle of the gods goes round thee as thou makest thy circuit, and they repulse the fiends for thee. O great one, Osiris, the path which thou followest cannot be told. Hail! son of Ra, who sittest in the barge of millions of years, come to thy hidden places." And the beloved soul, provided with magical formularies, exclaims as he enters the darkness, "I go through the tunnels of Ra. I know the meaning of things. By them I repulse the fiend. I see the mysteries; I rise as a King; I do not die in the underworld." If the solar quadruplex had any significance of this kind, it is a symbol of the restoration of life, and would be eagerly adopted by Christians. We find it, indeed, on many early crosses, one of which, from Durham, is shown in Illustration XV.

It is remarkable that the three Great Sacrifices which the Emperor celebrates as head of the Chinese religions, take place respectively at the solar solstices and the vernal equinox. The autumnal equinox is ignored. At Corinium is an example of a solar triplex, an interlacement of three ovals. It is surrounded by curled lotus leaves, and the artist, in order to increase its visual complexity, has, at intervals, changed the line of colour from one side of the strands to the other, Illustration XI. This method has been followed in the Dorchester intreccio.



The beginnings of all knowledge have come to us either from Greece or through Grecian channels. The Greeks were the fathers of philosophy; their art is unsurpassed; their mathematicians were employed by the Romans whose roads were often constructed by Greek engineers. It has been well said that even "Christianity made its appearance as a Greek religion. Our whole ecclesiastical nomenclature is Greek, with such words as bishop, deacon, baptism, eucharist; and in the Greek tongue were written our sacred books."

Two theatrical mosaics found at Pompeii are signed by Dioscorides of Samos. In Britain, Greek inscriptions occur on altars and memorial stones, and on the Isurium mosaic; whilst corresponding inscriptions in Latin are often corrupt. Three of the four men whose names have come down to us as private miners at Lutudarum, in Derbyshire, have Greek cognomina, Abascantus, Protus, and Trophimus, the fourth being Verecundus.\*

Did Greek artists design British pavements to please Roman and barbaric patrons?

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II.—We now pass on to consider other intrecci. They differ in type and in origin. 1. There is that which is merely a decoration, the skeuomorph of wickerwork or basketry. It existed in Egypt, Assyria, and Mycenæ. It borders the ancient Tarsus seal, B.C. 2000, Illustration XVII. It runs riot in the cables and braids of Roman pavements. On the Frampton mosaic, Illustration XVIII., a complex is constructed of an unbroken fibre, and is laid out like a mat for the amphora, as it were, to stand on. It may be seen, as a similar interlacement, on a parapet in the church of San Clementi, Rome, of the VI. cent., which Cattaneo† describes as perforated woven work like matting, and which Leader Scott calls a piece of basket-work in stone.

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\* Haverfield, *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, xv., 189.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

† *The Cathedral Builders*, p. 9.

But the strand of which the Christian example is composed has both a beginning and an end, and therefore cannot, as Mr. Barnes thinks it does, represent eternity.

This decorative interlacement, in highly intricate patterns, occurs in the early churches of Armenia and Wallachia.\*

It adorns the coped lid of a stone coffin at Bakewell, of the IX. cent., Illustration XIX. ; and forms a sort of raiment which clothes human figures on a cross at Checkley, Staffordshire, leading Bishop Browne to suggest that crosses constructed of wicker-work may have originated such a design.†

Indeed, the shafts of many crosses were covered with it, and in "the Holy Rood," Caedmon's great poem, mention seems to be made of it.

Ic gesawe  
syllicre treow  
on lyft laedan  
leohhte bewunden  
begoten mid golde ;

Saw I  
a rare tree,  
rising on high  
wrapt in light  
as though covered with gold.

Gimmas stóden (fægere) feowere,  
æt foldan sceatum,  
Swylce ðær fife waeron  
uppe on ðám eazlespanne.

Four gemstones were placed  
at the corners of the socket  
and five too, there were  
on the shoulder-yoke.

Geseah ic  
wuldres tréow  
wædum geworðode,  
wynnum scinan.

Saw I  
this wondrous tree,  
decked with raiment  
winsomely bright.

*Wædum geworðode* means 'Adorned with weeds,' or clothing. This word survives in the expression "widows' weeds." It is from a root WAD to bind, and is allied to "wattle," a hurdle.

It was of interlacements that were simply ornamental that the poet spoke. But there were others of a different kind.

2. Zoomorphic intrecci illustrated legends of divine powers and of magical compulsion. A stone discovered in the church-

\* Fergusson's *Architecture*. I, 477, 478, 495. He calls it "basket-pattern."

† Arch. L. 287.

yard at Gosforth has upon it a sculpture represented in Illustration XVI. It sets out a well-known pagan story, how Thor, the Defender of Man and the Serpent's Destroyer, "Orms ein-bani," went fishing with the giant Hymi.\* And Thor rowed out so far from land that Hymi said it was perilous there because of Midgarð's Orm, the great snake that lay in the deeps and encircled the whole earth, the bane of seafarers. And then, while Hymi began fishing for whales, Thor fastened to his own hook an ox's head. And the Great Worm itself, the enemy of the gods, gulped down the bait and was drawn up to the gunwale. And Thor with his hammer smote the head of the venom-streaked serpent, who struggled so furiously that Hymi, filled with fear, severed the line with his axe, and the snake, the Wolf's twin brother, fell back into the sea.

Above the head of the god, we see an intreccio. It is the reptile-contortions that signify the defeat of earth's and heaven's foe. A custom grew up among the pagans of the north, when they raised a stone of commemoration, to carve upon it Thor's head, or Thor's hammer, and to engrave runes upon the sculptured body of the dying dragon. Thor was mightier to save than the powers of evil to destroy. The inscription on the memorial monolith, 10 feet high, found at Stenqvista, Sweden, Illustration XXI. merely says "Helki and Fraufair & Thorkaut raised these seven stones to Thiuthmunt their father."

3. There are some intrecci in early Syriac churches that suggest a zoomorphic origin; and the legend that would account for them may be discerned in a highly-wrought allegory, the Hymn of the Soul, written by Bardaisan, of Mesopotamia, the great Gnostic theologian of the end of the II. cent.

" While yet a child and dwelling in my Father's House,  
Brought up in luxury and well content therewith,  
Out of the East, our Home, my Parents sent me forth.

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\* Corpus Boreale, Hymis Kvida.

“ And thus they promised me and wrote it in my heart ;  
 ‘ If thou go down to Egypt and bring thence the Pearl,  
 ‘ That which the hissing Serpent guardeth in the Sea  
 ‘ Then, with thy Brother in our Realm, thou shalt be Heir.’

“ Straight to the Serpent I advanced and near him dwelt,  
 The cruel hissing Serpent I began to charm  
 And lulling him to slumber, seized the Pearl.”

4. Another dracontine intreccio indicates the death of the earth-serpent Fafni. We may see the story told on a stone discovered at Ramsundsberg, on the Mäler Lake, Sweden. It is shown in Illustration XXII.

Fafni guarded a hoard of gold, and Sigurd, his destroyer, dug a pit beneath the dragon's trail, between the treasure-heap and a stream. And as the Serpent passed by, Sigurd thrust him through with his sword. Then Regin, the dwarf smith, who was Fafni's brother, cut open his breast and drank the blood, and desired Sigurd to toast the heart. And Sigurd, toasting it on a spit, burnt his thumb and put it to his mouth, and so, tasting dragon's blood, he suddenly understood the voice of the birds that were talking together on a tree. And they said it would be wise of Sigurd to make Regin shorter by the head, that all the treasure might be his. And so Regin was slain.

No story was more popular than this. Everywhere, even, at last, in Christian churches, the Fafni contortions were carved, the intreccio that signified the overthrow of evil. Among pagans we see it on Gotland circular brooches of bronze ; in a tomb-carving at Maeshowe ; and on the hilt of Saxon swords.

Among Christians, we see it on church portals in Norway, and on a cross in Halton graveyard, Lancaster, which presents many details of this altogether heathen story, including the dragon's death-knot.

None of these carvings is pre-Roman ; but what they relate discloses a primitive state of society, and must have come down from a remote antiquity. There is nothing like it in Roman legends, and intrecci of this kind never came from Italy. On the other hand, Egyptian influence, spreading through eastern

Europe to the North, strongly reinforced this legendary art, and helped to carry it, with a hardly changed significance, into Christian symbolism.

5. The next intreccio to be examined is connected with an animal engaged either in seizing other animals, or in biting its own body, and generally its own tail. A common representation is of a serpent with tail in mouth. We may see it in a Saxon earring from Norfolk, which closely resembles what has been found in Egypt of the Rameside period ; in a Saxon gold ring, from Sussex ; and in a carving on a Saxon tomb at Bedale Church, Yorkshire. This has been described as "two serpents interwoven biting their tails," but it would be more correct to say that each is biting its own tail. In Illustration XIX., is represented a sculpture described by Boutell\* as "Knotwork and monsters half animal, half vegetable." A carving of the same class appears on the Durham Cross, Illustration XV., and another on a tympanum at Penmon Priory, Anglesey. How are these and all others like them to be explained ?

It will be said, at once, that the coiled serpent of Egyptian type, tail in mouth, represents Eternity. For the following reasons, however, this cannot be :—(a.) A mere symbol of Eternity, of endless time, is the last thing a man in those days, or in any days, would carve on a tomb. What he chiefly desired was to escape as soon as possible from the underworld, and to obtain an ultimate restoration of life. (b.) The interlacement often consists of two or three serpents ; or the tail-biting animal is a quadruped ; or, instead of the tail, it is biting its own or another's body. (c.) Horapollo relates that when the ancient Egyptians would represent past Eternity they delineate a serpent with its tail covered by the rest of its body, which they call *ὀφθαῖον*, the Greeks *βασιλισκον*, and its image in gold is placed on the head of the gods.† (d.) The Egyptians had two ways of writing eternity,

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\* *Christian Monuments*, pp. 11, 12.

† Corey's trans., p. 6. Horapollo's work on hieroglyphics is of the V. cent. A.D. Paul Pierret says : *Le sens des hiéroglyphes y est généralement bien saisi.*

and they both occur in a single sentence of the Book of the Dead, chap. lxii. "I am heir of eternity; to me hath been given everlastingness." The expressions differ.

In one, the solar disc is the determinative, and in the other, the sign for the Delta, or land without horizon. Moreover, the snake's attitude in the latter expression is not that of a circle, tail in mouth, but it rather confirms Horapollo's description, though the reptile is more like an asp than a uræus.

We must look elsewhere for an explanation. It is to be found in the practice of magic, as revealed in the Book of the Overthrowing of Apep. This was a sort of litany which was recited in the temple of Amon Ra every day. The papyrus roll which contains it was written B.C. 305, but the work itself is much more ancient.

Apep was the Sun God's greatest foe in the underworld. It is natural that the Book of the Dead should fully describe the monster. He dwelt on a mountain and was 500 cubits in length. The determinative attached to his name is a snake in five undulations, with a sword stuck in each of them.\* On the Sarcophagus of Oimeneptha† his folds are intricate. Nothing but his overthrow could bring a restoration of life to the dying soul.

"Praise to Ra," we read in the litany, "the great god in his disc, who destroyeth Apep in the underworld. O ye gods of the south, north, west, and east, tie and fetter Apep; set fetters round about him. Ye starry deities of Orion fetter him; and ye who dwell in the decans fetter him. The Great Bear of the Northern Heavens, cast him down. O ye fetterers, fetter ye, fetter ye Apep, that enemy of Ra. Horus who dwelleth unseen cries 'Tie him up, slay him with your swords, with sacred knives of flint.' Apep shall be overthrown on sea, on land, and among the stars."

\* It is remarkable that the name of the fourth Mexican monarch was Itzcoatl, or "knife-snake," represented by a number of obsidian knives stuck in a serpent's back.

† B.C. 1147.

The unhappy soul, terrified at the prospect of this encounter, was to be succoured by magical arts. Inscriptions were to be traced on fresh papyrus, and wax figures of Apep were to be wrapped in it and cast upon the ground and into the fire. Make the figure of a serpent, runs the instruction, having its tail in its mouth, and a knife stuck in its back. Cast it upon the ground and say, Apep the Fiend. Make a second serpent with the face of a cat; make two more serpents with other bestial faces. Tie each one up and fetter it, and cast it upon the ground, saying "O Apep, enemy of Ra, get thee back, down with thy head even to the dust. May thy tail be placed in thine own mouth; mayest thou bite into thine own skin. Apep, the Fiend, be fettered!"

Such thaumaturgy may, perhaps, be recognised in the coils of the serpent that protects the canopy over Ra, in his barge; and, tail in mouth, surrounded the solar disc which is the sign of Ra, in his passage through the underworld.\* Magical arts that long ago came hither from the East are still followed in the towns and villages of England by persons who, nevertheless, go to church and listen to sermons that are sometimes scientific. What may not have been practised when even priests believed that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, descended into hell and waged war against his great foe, the evil one, in the underworld, where the soul, exposed to unknown dangers, must wait until the resurrection? So spells were wrought against heaven's enemy, and they were endowed with a certain permanence by being made of metal or carved on stone. The two serpents on the Bedale tomb, with tail in mouth, are entangled in their death throes. The like may be seen displayed on the porch at Monkwearmouth. Elsewhere Christ, the divine Stag, is trampling upon contorted reptiles. The feet of the monsters on the Bakewell coffin are fettered, and each is biting his own body. Toils, also, are spread for the feet of the beast at Penmon

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\* Sarcophagus of Oimeneuptha, Plates 4, 5.

Priory, whose tail is in his mouth, whilst the mortal writhings of a serpent are seen above.\*

These are but samples of Saxon and Norman sculpture, of similar intention, scattered through the kingdom. Mural paintings of a later period which illustrate the "Harrowing of Hell," show a fiend in human form, bound with cords or chains, according to the Book of Revelation, xx., 2. The universal theme is the overthrow of Apep, of the old dragon which is the Devil and Satan.

Perhaps this is the place to notice the lacertine interlacements to be found in early † Irish, Saxon, Carlovingian, and Lombardic MSS. They are later than much of the ruder work in metal and stone; and Miss Stokes truly remarks that "the scribe of the VII. cent. in his illuminated page represents the graceful designs of the pre-Christian artist in bronze and gold." The pen is a more facile instrument than the chisel. The cloistered monk was less exposed to undercurrents of pagan thought than his masonic brother. It was the latter's business to excite the imagination and enlist the sympathy of the common half-heathen people. But the anchorite, setting loose his own fancy, wrought his wondrous intrecci to embellish a copy of the Gospels that a monastic reliquary was to enshrine. In his delightful task he augmented, to the highest degree, the intricacy of his decoration. But beneath it all, we recognise the bitings and writhings of monsters that the Christ of the Gospels came to destroy.

6. The next intreccio to be noticed is the magic knot. Knitting knots as a means of witchcraft is still practised in Britain. The bonds are tied either for evil or for good, and that the spell may be undone, the knot must be loosed. Knots were made of the branches of trees; of the birch and the

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\* Romilly Allen's *Christian Symbolism*, p. 386.

† Lindisfarne Gospels, A.D. 698-721. Gospels of MacRegol, 820. Those of Durrow, 879-916. Of MacDurnan, 891-925. Book of Kells, "before 1000," Psalter of Ricemarch, 1089-1096.



willow. Woden, the Reader of Mystic Runes, declares "I know a chant whereby, if a man hurts me by spells of the withy, the curse shall seize him and not me."\*

Sigurd boasts against Eystein "I went all the way to Jordan, and swam across the river, and there I twisted a knot of willows which is waiting there for thee. For this knot, I said, thou shouldst untie, or take the curse that is bound up in it."

And there were love-knots, too, and bonds of fidelity. But knots knitted in stone, tied by the sculptor's hand, could not well be undone. We may see them on a Roman altar of the Galli, from Northumberland; in a rock-sculpture of Scotland; on a stone coffin from Cambridge Castle; and on Disley Cross, Illustration VII.

Perhaps the latter examples indicate the bond that unites the soul and the Redeemer.

7. Lastly there are phyllomorphic intrecci, or those which have arisen from a decorative treatment of sacred trees. Assyrian art had made them rigid and symmetrical. In a paper read to this club two years ago, reference was made to the Arbor Pereclixion, that grew amidst water-streams. It was a Mesopotamian conception. Its fruit furnished food, the branches gave shelter, the shade brought sleep. But, together with the doves that sought its boughs, it was especially a charm against the cruel dragon.† Such a tree seems to be intended by a sculpture at Ferrara, of the VIII. cent.‡ Doves and peacocks, resting on the angular and ungraceful branches, are secure from wild beasts below and from serpents above. The advance of Christian art developed this into the vineal intreccio shown in Illustration XX.

Mr. Barnes maintains, in his chapter of Leader Scott's book *The Cathedral Builders*, that all the intrecci of this country were

\* *Háva Mál*, Corpus Boreale.

† Arborem quoque Pereclixion incolere, ejus fructu refici, umbra requiescere, ramis protegi, dicunt et a crudeli dracone tueri. Istiusmodi physici de columba docent. Vita B. Columbæ Reatinæ v., 323.

‡ Cattaneo, *Op. Cit.*, p. 132.

brought hither by Italians, and more particularly that all the intrecci on our Christian monuments were the work of the Comacine Guild. It will already have become clear that this was not the case; that there was a strong and independent evolution of interlacing designs in the North of Europe. Indeed it may well have been that lacertine decoration spread from the North into Italy. In the III. and IV. centuries B.C. there was a colony of Gauls on the Adriatic, and in their cemetery have been discovered, as Leader Scott herself relates, serpent ornaments connected with a religious cult.

Attention has been drawn to a cross, or rather to portions of one, that was disinterred from the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, Rome; and notwithstanding that Cattaneo, p. 190, assigns it to the IX. cent. it has been claimed as the origin of what is called the Irish Cross.

It is represented in Illustration XXIII., and it may be seen that it bears no resemblance whatever to any ancient cross in Ireland, Cornwall, or Wales. In a small panel at the base of the lower limb is a twisted withy band or magic knot, common throughout Europe. Above it is a Byzantine decoration not to be matched on any early cross in these islands; whilst the intreccio on the upper limb, suggesting as it does the Egyptian Apep, and occurring on Assyrian cylinders, is equally foreign.

There can be no doubt that Augustine and Paulinus and other missionaries brought masons with them, who may have been Italians, though Beda expressly states that Benedict Biscop's masons were Gauls. It is also certain that their object was to introduce the basilican form of church and the Roman manner of construction.

But as regards decoration, there is no evidence of an exclusive Italian style.

The Comacine Guild was a receptive school of builders. Greek, Byzantine, and Saracenic art had reached them; they were doubtless acquainted with the intrecci of Georgian and

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\* *Illustrated Archaeologist*, iv., 1.

Syriac churches ; and afterwards, in Sicily, they absorbed much from the Normans.

The Italian interlacements that most resemble our own are in the churches of S. Ambrogio, Milan, and of S. Prassede, Rome, both of the IX. cent. It was during the dynasty of the Lombard Kings, which began in 568 and lasted 200 years, that such intrecci attained their greatest vogue in Italy. It is well, therefore, to consider who these men were who made themselves masters of that country, and whose dependants the Comacine Guild became ? Who were those princes who took with them their guards and their court, and the decorated arms and equipment of wealth and fashion ?

Gibbon suggests that the Lombard Kings were Scandinavians ; but Latham points out that the names of the first four of them were Anglo-Saxon : Edwin, Elfwin, Clapa, and Edgar : and recalls that in the Anglo-Saxon *Traveller's Song* Ælfwine and Eadwine are given as the royal names for Lombardy.

Spylce ic pæs on Eatule  
Mid Ælfwine  
Se hæfde mon-cynnes  
heortan unhnæpeste  
hringa gedales  
beorhtan beaga,  
bearn Eadpines \*

Also I was in Italy  
with Elfwin  
who had, of all mankind,  
the amplest heart  
in the giving of rings,  
of bright bracelets,  
this child of Edwin.

The argument is capable of much extension, did time permit. It is only possible to adduce, in conclusion, three cogent facts.  
1. Early Irish churches differ from Italian churches of the Lombard style in many particulars. They are diminutive in size and are not basilican in form. The sanctuaries have square ends and not a rounded apse. The jambs of the doors incline towards each other at the top ; and there is no example of an open arcade. 2. Early English churches were enriched by baluster shafts of stone, turned on the lathe, instead of by short Roman columns. These balusters have been found at Dover, at Worth

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\* *Scald's Tale*, Codex. Exon., Thorpe, p. 322.

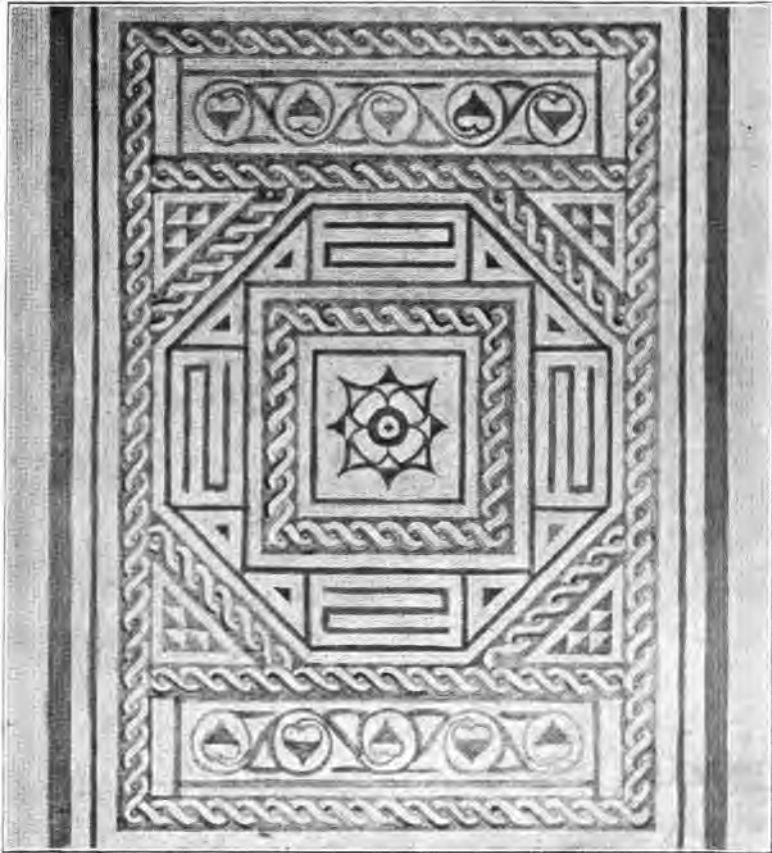
in Sussex, at St. Albans, at Earl's Barton and Brixworth in Northamptonshire, at Barton-on-Humber, and at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. There is nothing like this use of them in the churches of Italy. 3. The Comacine sculptors, following a habit of old Rome, were above all things fond of representing the peacock; but they made it, as was done in the catacombs, an emblem of the redeemed. An example from S. Pietro, Villanova, is shown in Illustration VIII. If only Italian conceptions had been wrought here, and only Italian traditions obeyed, peacocks would have covered the carved stones of Saxon times. But where are these Imperial birds?

It is certainly possible to show two, on a stone from Rous Lench in Worcestershire, Illustration XX., discovered last year built into the church's wall. Bishop Browne calls the sculpture unique. It is certainly of great rarity. The full influence of Italian art is displayed upon it, though no Italian was the artist. We are permitted to see Christ as the True Vine, sickle in hand, raising aloft a cluster of grapes of which two peacocks are tasting. They are souls drinking new wine in the Father's Kingdom. The tree is full of tendrils and fruit, and forms a wide-spreading intreccio, which, like the Arbor pereclixon, protects the birds on its boughs from the guile of the serpent. But the serpent is neither biting its own body, nor writhing in the contortions of death.

In fine, the Comacine interlacements have no depth of feeling. They were got at second hand. Symbols that elsewhere had a solar significance, or a zoomorphic meaning, are misunderstood and distorted. Everything is turned into mere decoration. There is no passion of living legend; no emotion of magic. The shafts and columns of Lombard Churches—like Cædmon's cross, *wædum geworðode*—were clad with intrecci as with a garment, to please a prevailing taste, but in no wise to minister to a fear-stricken soul.



# **Preston Roman Pavement.**



ROMAN PAVEMENT *in situ* AT PRESTON, NEAR WEYMOUTH.

[From a plan presented to the Dorset County Museum by G. R. Crickmay, Esq.]





## Preston Roman Pavement.

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By HY. COLLEY MARCH, M.D., F.S.A.

(Read Sept. 10th, 1900.)

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THE Dorset Field Club just twelve years ago visited Preston to see the pavement, when an account was given of the finding on Jordan Hill, in 1832, of a so-called Roman temple, a sanatorium, and a cemetery. Of this, the last edition of Hutchins' *History of Dorset* contains many particulars. The pavement was found by accident in 1852 by Mr. Scutt, the tenant of the farm; and it was fully uncovered for the British Archæological Association in 1871.

Our lamented Vice-President, the late Sir Talbot Baker, roofed it over, and it was furnished with a wire protection by this society.

Much Romano-British pottery has been found in the neighbourhood of this pavement, in the adjacent garden, in the meadow, and in Preston churchyard, as well as many coins dating from Gordian to Postumus, a period of about 30 years, in the 3rd century from A.D. 237 to 267. It is important to notice that Postumus was an Emperor of Gaul, styled Germanicus Maximus, who surrounded himself with a Gaulish court, and with artificers of great merit.



The room containing the pavement was 21 feet square, and the mosaic itself was about 15 feet square. The tesserae vary in size and in shape. For the ordinary geometrical patterns of corridors and so forth they exceed an inch square, whilst for the work of delicate portions of the design some are less than half that size; and the square form is departed from as occasion requires. The colours are, or were, black or brown, red, blue or grey, and white or yellow, but the last are now hardly distinguishable. In many Romano-British mosaics, a row of bluish tesserae is often interposed between the white row and the red one. It should be noticed here that in the cable-pattern the strand is composed of an outer and an inner line of black, of a single line of red, and of a double line of white tesserae. I venture to think that one of the latter, that next the red, consisted of blue or grey, now utterly faded. The material is all from the surrounding district, and is a little coarser than that which composes the fine mosaic in Olga Road. The red tesserae consist of broken tiles, and not of terra cotta; the black are Kimmeridge coal, and not a Devonshire marble; the white and bluish white are of Purbeck stone, of which beds extend from Chalbury to Poxwell. Near the latter place, an exposure may be seen from which the banded specimen of blue and white now shown was recently taken. By Mr. Crickmay's drawing, prepared when the mosaic was uninjured, the scheme can be easily understood. The management of the tesserae should be observed. The white ones which serve for filling-in are arranged with skilful purpose. A special row of them follows and supports all the chief lines of the design; and a double row emphasises the most important features. Even the tesseral joints possess a high value, for, set at right angles to the running, they greatly enhance the beauty of the general effect.

At the meeting of the Club twelve years ago, it was contended that the pavement belonged to Christian times, because it contained no pictures of heathen mythology; but this view is, of course, quite untenable. The design strikingly resembles in type that of the Dorchester tessellation, and belongs, doubtless,

to the same period. Those persons who think that man began to adorn a variety of objects from an inbred tendency to embellish things, will be inclined to go no farther. It will suffice for them to say "Lo! here is a decorated floor." Others, who believe that the love of ornament has been of slow growth, that it originated, on the one hand, from a close attention to the forms of artifice and structure, and, on the other, from efforts to fashion magical charms and devices, will see at Preston what I have attempted to decipher on the Dorchester mosaic.

The cordage motif, that plays its part here, we may recognise also on early British vases, on Assyrian cylinders, and on the propylons of ancient Egypt. It sprang from that expectancy of completeness that was associated with fabrics of twisted fibre, of basketry, and wattlework. And we witness, too, the mystical mark, the auspicious token, which claimed alliance with the divine life and power that shone forth from Heaven and that all men knew and venerated. Sometimes this affinity was denoted openly by a radiant solar circle, and sometimes it was indicated by cryptic signs like those which were furnished by the Lily of the Nile, the emblem of the sun. The Egyptians were, naturally, the first people to develop their favourite motif into a scroll, to insert into the opening spirals a lotus flower, and to adorn the ceilings of their tombs with this fitting symbolism. A thousand years afterwards, in B.C. 700, the Phœnicians had carried the design across the Mediterranean, where it decorated Melian vases. Ultimately it was adopted by the Greeks, who handed on to Rome the lotus-frieze we now possess. In the pavement before us, a parallelogram is bordered by a cable pattern. From side to side, at the two ends of the oblong, runs a lotiform scroll. By this treatment the oblong is resolved into a square. This, broken up into an octagon, encloses another, the predominant square, which contains the ruling device of the entire scheme. All the ornamental fields are separated by the binding motif, the same cable pattern. Outside the octagon, the corners are filled with triangles; between the octagon and

the inner square the space is occupied by fretted spirals; and the central panel sustains a rosette, a disc with eight rays. The Preston pavement is signed with the signature of the lotus. The rayed circle, the triangle supports, the fretted spirals, the floral frieze, are, in all their details, lotus derivatives.

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#### POSTSCRIPTUM.

The Vikings, in some of their wanderings, must have seen the solar-duplex. They took it as a suitable sign for their sun-god Frey, and, in their decorative metal-work, placed it beside the triquetra (Worsaae, *Danish Art*, p. 197). A similar association may be seen in a church at Assisi, IX. cent., where the two symbols, now with a Christian significance, rest on the lateral limbs of a Latin cross (Cattaneo, *op. cit.*, p. 197).

The term "solar cross" is too restrictive. It would be better to call it the "sign of orientation." Its equal limbs indicate the four cardinal points. It stands as a solar symbol, and it decussates the sun's disc, because it is the sun that determines the east and the west, the south and the north. The equilateral cross, which designates territorial expansion in certain picture-writings, does so by spreading its equal arms to the four quarters of the world. But it is especially the solar cross of North America that should be called the Sign of Orientation, since it was used by the Indians to specify the winds which were sometimes made to issue from holes in its limbs. A sign, among the same people, that accidentally resembles the Latin cross, stood for rain; the heavens being represented by the transverse, and the downpour by the vertical bar.

By the car-driving nations of the old world, the decussated solar disc was developed into a six-rayed wheel, the "roue solaire," which was used in Chaldæan worship, as a symbol of the sun, B.C. 600 (Perrot and Chipiez, *Hist. of Art*, II., 275). The Gaulish sun-god is represented as carrying a six-rayed wheel on his shoulder (Gaidoz, *Symbolisme de la Roue*, p. 3).

This "Amulet of the Gauls" was adopted by Christians, who named it "the star of Constantine." Regarded as a chrisma it was, not the Chi Rho, but the Iota Chi, that found its place in the decoration of Syrian churches, as at El Barah (Vogüe, Plates 42, 49), and afterwards in Italy.

The Labarum, a ringed Chi without the Iota, is called by M. Gaidoz (*op. cit.*, p. 78) "la roue équilatérale disposée diagonalement."

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The dates given to some Irish Illuminated MSS. in a footnote (p. 183) are the earliest references to them by the Annalists. The late Bishop Reeves, to whom the question of their antiquity was referred by Haddon and Stubbs, assigned the Books of Armagh, Moling, Dimma, Macdurnan, Durrow, and Kells to the early part of the IX. cent. (H. and S., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, I., 190).

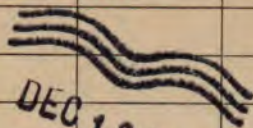




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